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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: UNESCO-AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION WITH COUNTERPARTS ON US-EU RELATIONS, UNESCO REFORM, THE NEW ADG FOR CULTURE AND ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS AT UNESCO

Ref: Paris 536

1. (SBU) Summary. During the week of January 23, Ambassador Oliver met with the Ambassadors of Austria (current EU president), Finland (upcoming EU president), Italy (a major player at UNESCO) and Jordan to discuss US relations with EU states, UNESCO reform and a substantive agenda, as well as other matters, including the Mideast peace process as it plays out at UNESCO.

#### US-EU RELATIONS AT UNESCO

2. (SBU) In separate discussions with Finnish Ambassador Pertti Majanen and Austrian Ambassador Harald Wiesner, Ambassador Oliver emphasized that strengthening transatlantic relations at UNESCO is as important as strengthening EU coordination. (Note: relations were strained by negotiations on the cultural diversity convention.) She also said that she was disturbed by the current trend of internal EU debates resulting in the US being "informed" of EU positions that will shape the UNESCO agenda. Ambassador Oliver asked that the US be engaged in discussion with the EU earlier and emphasized that UNESCO must remain an organization where individual states can continue to express opinions, and not just a place for presenting group positions. Majanen agreed that was necessary but said he would have to figure out the appropriate way to do that given all the different internal positions on issues within the EU. Wiesner also reported that the Finn had told him that repairing transatlantic relations at UNESCO was one of his top priorities. Wiesner mentioned that he and Majanen had put this topic on the agenda at one of the EU's last coordination meetings and that it had received great support.

#### EVERYONE AGREES, UNESCO NEEDS RESULTS AND REFORM

3. (SBU) UNESCO reform was a recurring theme at all meetings. Ambassador Oliver emphasized with all her interlocutors the need to produce real results in the next two years. With the Finn she highlighted the possibility of working closely with the Nordics in the education and natural science sectors, an area of vital importance to the US at UNESCO. In her meeting with Italian ambassador Giuseppe Moscato, she spoke of the need to work closely between now and the April Executive Board on a common agenda. Moscato also shared Ambassador Oliver's concerns about the decentralization process at UNESCO and the need for accountability and expressed particular concern about the UNESCO institute in Trieste, Italy, which the Italian government supports to the tune of USD20 million a year. He indicated that since Italy gets no feedback and has no idea if good results are being achieved, continued funding for the institute is being questioned during the present budget crunch.

4. (SBU) Moscato was supportive of a suggestion by Amb. Oliver for an Executive Board resolution asking the heads of a certain number of institutes be required to present detailed briefings on their programs annually. (Note: The Czech Ambassador told the DCM that she is also disturbed by the Trieste institute's handling of funds for projects in Kosovo.)

5. (SBU) Ambassador Oliver also discussed reform with Jordanian Ambassador Dina Kavar. Kavar agreed that there is a need for common priorities, especially in education. She offered to lend her support to the US and will work to create a common agenda for the next Executive Board.

#### THE RACE FOR THE NEXT ADG CULTURE

5. (SBU) Moscato also indicated that he was sure that Francoise Riviere (France) will be chosen as the next ADG for Culture over a well-qualified Italian, Francesco Bandarin, the current director of the World Heritage Center. (septel)

16. (SBU) During the Jordanian meeting, Ambassador Kavar expressed concern that the Arab Group will lose a key ADG post with the departure at the end of February of Mounir Bouchenaki (Algeria) who combined professional expertise with political sensitivity. There will be an Arab group meeting this week to discuss this topic. (reftel)

#### UNESCO'S ROLE IN THE MIDEAST PEACE PROCESS

17. (SBU) In recent years, UNESCO has been playing a positive role in the Mideast peace process. Several resolutions on cultural and educational activities in the Palestinian territories and Jerusalem have been negotiated and passed the Executive Board by consensus. The EU, US and Arab states have all participated in the negotiations. Recently, the Israeli delegation made it clear that they will not negotiate a new declaration, only an updated version of what has been passed previously. Both the Austrian and Finnish ambassadors indicated that they intend to play active roles facilitating this process in upcoming Executive Board meetings.

18. (SBU) Jordanian Ambassador Kavar agreed with the need for consensus resolutions and said that the external political context should not drive decisions at UNESCO that focus solely on education and culture. She also agreed to support the concept of an un-amended Secretariat document at the next Board meeting but

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added that at some point the resolutions might have to reflect changes on the ground.

19. (SBU) Comment. We are hearing many expressions of goodwill about working with the United States to reform UNESCO and achieve measurable results. The next couple of months will be crucial in the lead-up to the first Executive Board of the new biennium. Is there a will for change? We will see.

OLIVER